

A BLESSED WONDER

NO. 936

A SERMON

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

Matthew 8:10.

YOU remember that we commenced this morning's sermon by observing that Jesus is not reported to have marvelled either at the gigantic architecture of the temple, or at the wonderful discipline of the Roman army, or at the profound knowledge of the rabbis. He only wondered twice, according to the record, and on both of those occasions he marveled concerning faith, once at the absence of it, and once at its presence. In the case which we spoke of this morning, He marveled at the unbelief of His fellow townsmen, in the narrative before us, He marveled at the faith of the centurion. From this we learn that we ought not to be so engrossed with the wonders of science and of art, or even with the wonders of creation and of providence, as to become indifferent to the marvels of grace. These should occupy the very highest place in our estimation.

The seven wonders of the world are nothing when compared with the countless wonders of grace. That man must be foolish who does not admire the works of God in nature, he is frivolous who does not trace with awe the hand of God in history, and he is even more unwise who despises the masterpieces of divine skill and wisdom which are to be seen in the empire of grace. In the kingdom of God the wise man only wonders once in his life, but that is always, fools think not so, but they are void of understanding. The museum of grace is richer than that of nature. A heart broken on account of sin is a far greater wonder than the rarest fossil, whatever it may tell of ancient floods of the sea or convulsions of the land. An eye that glistens with the tears of penitence is a greater marvel than the cataract of Niagara, or the fountains of the Nile.

Faith that humbly links itself to Christ has in it as great a beauty as the rainbow, and the confidence which looks alone to Jesus, and so irradiates the soul, is as much an object for admiration as is the sun when he shines in his strength. Talk not of the pyramids, the Colossus, the golden house of Nero, or the temple of Ephesus, for the living temple of God's church is fairer far. Let others glory in the marvels they have seen but it is mine to say unto my Lord, “I will praise you, for you have done wonderful things. Your love to me was wonderful. Surely I will remember your wonders of old.”

Consider well the work of God within the human heart, consider well the faith which lies at the beginning and foundation of spiritual life, and you will have as good cause for wonder as the Savior had when He marveled at the centurion's faith. The peculiar point for admiration may not be the same, but all faith has in it admirable elements, and like its divine Author, may be called “wonderful.”

I shall speak upon what there was that was so remarkable in the centurion's faith, making practical remarks in a kind of running comment as we pass along, and then if there should be any fragments that remain to be gathered up, we shall try again to apply them in the same style of personal application.

I. What was there, then, about the centurion's faith so remarkable that Christ wondered at it? I think the first point was THAT THERE WAS SUCH faith FOUND IN SUCH A PERSON.

The Lord seemed to imply this when He said, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel,” as if He might have expected to find it in Israel, among an instructed people, among a people to whom the oracles had been committed, but He could not have expected to find it in a Gentile, in a Roman, in a soldier, in one who was apparently an unlikely subject for spiritual influences. From this I gather that the

most astonishing and acceptable faith may be exercised by the most unlikely persons. Here was a Gentile believing, a Gentile believing far better than one of the seed of Israel. Rich grace thus brought the far-off one into the full blessing of the kingdom. Here was a soldier believing, a Roman soldier believing in the Lord. Roman soldiers in Judea were not as our armies are, a guard protecting their native hearths and homes, but they were the servants of tyrants, treading down the liberties of the Jewish people, and obnoxious, of course, in the highest degree to the Jews, and yet for all that, though the soldier's trade in those days was oppression, and his wages were plunder, here was a soldier believing in Jesus Christ, and to increase the wonder, this believing legionary was not a common soldier merely, but one who occupied a position of responsibility, bringing to him no small degree of honor and of respect.

Alas! the honors of this world are seldom helpful to belief. When a man receives honor of men, he too often finds it impossible to receive the Gospel as a little child. All these things met in the centurion, and yet he was not only a believer, but a surpassing believer, even to a marvel, so that Christ wondered at his faith.

My dear friend, though you should happen to be in the most unlikely circumstances of body and of mind for you to be converted and to become a Christian, yet I see not what does hinder your being so converted if the Lord blesses the word. If you have been brought up altogether apart from the influences of religion, yet remember, so also was this centurion, and he became a master-believer. Why should not you? Though the ground of your heart has as yet never been tilled, and remains like the virgin soil of the primeval forest, yet my Lord may get a gracious crop out of your heart not many days hence, when the tillage of the law, and the sowing of the Gospel shall have been tried upon you, for by His gracious touch He can turn a barren heath into a fruitful field. Though you feel tonight as waste as the moorland, yet you need not despair. Though now dewless as Gilboa, He can water you as plenteously as Hermon itself. The barren woman shall yet keep house, and the desolate shall rejoice in her children. Nature's death may yet yield to the Spirit's life.

Perhaps you follow a calling which is supposed to be inimical to religion, but even then, despair not. Why should not the Master call you by His grace, and compel you to leave the calling, as Matthew left the receipt of custom, or else through the power of grace within you, enable you to exercise your calling without sin? You have, perhaps, never read the Bible, why should you not begin? It is possible that you have been a disbeliever in it, yet there are such arguments in its favor—I am not about to trouble you with them just now—but there are among them living arguments which may convince you before you are quite aware that your prejudice is being removed, for some of us have tasted and handled of the word of life, and are witnesses of the power which comes with the Gospel. We are ourselves living witnesses of what it can do in breathing peace into the soul, and in putting sin away, and I see not why you also should not prove it and rejoice in it, yea, and even distance others in the race of grace.

That tinker playing cat on Sunday, on Elstow Green, did not look a likely man to write the Pilgrim's Progress, and yet John Bunyan did it. That blaspheming sailor cast ashore on a slave-trade settlement, on the coast of Africa, and there made a slave himself, did not look as though he would become a minister of evangelical godliness, whose name should be sweet and full of savor to after generations, and yet such was John Newton. There is no reason, because of the darkness of the past, why the future should not be bright, for there is one who can blot out sin and pass by transgression and iniquity.

However hostile your nature may be to the Gospel and to spiritual truth, there is power in Jesus Christ to change that nature, and to cause you, the most unlikely person, to become a leader in His camp, a mighty trophy of His sovereign grace. Is it not written, "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me"? "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved." Surely angels rejoiced when they heard the Roman legionary say, "Speak the word, and my servant shall be healed." Surely the disciples as they clustered around the Master, said one to another, "What strange work of grace is this, that this soldier should stand here and speak better than any of us concerning the truth and the power of the Lord Jesus!" I do pray to see some in this place become equally remarkable trophies of Christ's power. I do expect to see

throughout this our country the most unlikely persons converted. The great trumpet shall be blown, and great sinners shall find that the day of their redemption has come. From the east and from the west, the far-off ones shall gather to the feast of love, while the astonished church shall cry, "These, where have they been?"

The church could not have thought that Saul of Tarsus who once persecuted the church would have become her chief apostle, and yet so it was, and so it shall be still while the King sits on His throne. He will yet come down again and take out of the ranks of the enemy the stoutest hearted men, and make them bow their knees before His majesty, and afterwards He will enlist them beneath His own standard, and send them forth conquering and to conquer. The prey shall be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive shall be delivered. Grace shall yet more abound where sin abounded. As in the present case, the marvel of grace shall be the more memorable because of the singularity of the person enjoying it. May God make you such a person, and such a wonder, too!

II. The next point concerning which our Lord may have marveled was THE SUBJECT OF THE CENTURION'S CONFIDENCE.

He had a servant who was struck with palsy. This was a disease which, at that time at any rate, if not at present, was reckoned to be utterly incurable. In the case of this servant, the disease was of the most aggravated kind, for he was "grievously tormented." The strength of his constitution battling with the paralysis caused an unusual agony. It had come to a climax, for he was at the point to die, yet though a cure of the palsy had never been heard of, and was a most astounding miracle if ever wrought, this man believed that Christ could heal the palsy and could at once restore his servant to perfect health. Yes, here was a faith which took an impossibility into its hand, and threw it aside, faith which knew that all things were possible with an omnipotent Savior, faith which saw in Christ that omnipotent Savior, and therefore raised no question as to His ability or willingness.

Dear hearers, this is the kind of faith I would that we all exercised. I will suppose, dear friend, tonight that your case, your sinful case, is like that of the centurion's servant's physical case. You believe your sin to be incurable, that is to say, unpardonable. You think also that if it were pardoned as to the past, yet you would be sure to go back to it again, as a dog returns to his vomit. You therefore look upon your case as being an utterly hopeless one. O do not so, do not so! He who can heal the drunkenness that lies in one or the tendency to lust that lurks in another, can cast out any and every sort of sin, and cast it out with a word.

There is no transgression too black for His blood to wash out the stain, and there is no propensity to sin too strong for His Spirit to control and at last destroy it. Cures of all cases of spiritual disease are possible with Him. The blackest sinner may yet become the brightest saint. At the gates of hell you may sit tonight in your moral filthiness, and yet not only at the gates of heaven may you yet stand in the brightness of holiness, but within those gates you may yet be enclosed in the perfection of spotlessness with all the rest who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

The centurion's faith was this—he believed that there were no impossibilities with Christ, and he left his palsied servant in those gracious and mighty hands. And, my friend, your faith, if it is to save you, must do the same. It must take your case at its worst, and yet believe that Christ can save even to the uttermost. Your sin has been aggravated—confess it. Your sin is in its own self unpardonable, justice writes it with a pen of iron, and no tears of repentance or endeavors after reformation can blot it out. Only sovereign grace, fresh from the altar of atoning sacrifice, can make an end of sin. Confess all this. You are far gone from hope—confess it. Your natural estate is perilous, nay, deadly—confess it. Make out your case to be as bad as you can conceive it to be—it is so—and when you have done so, say, "But for all that, I believe that God in Christ Jesus can forgive me, and I rest my guilty soul at the foot of the cross where expiation was made for sin, I believe that Jesus there put my guilt away, and thus I have peace with God."

If you believe that you are a little sinner, and that therefore, because of the moderate degree of your guilt, Christ can save you, you know nothing about it, but if knowing your sin to be great, heinous,

aggravated, damnable, and you can still come to Jesus, you do glorify His name. If you do avow yourself to be the chief of sinners, and yet do believe that He can save you, and rely upon Him to do it, you have a marvelous faith, a faith that will bring you to heaven. Not to forget the guilt of our sin, and then trust Jesus, but to remember our sin with more shame and grief than ever, and yet to trust in the cleansing blood of Jesus—this is faith, this is the wonder of the skies.

Be of good cheer, O sinner, if all your reliance leans on the Mediator, despite ten thousand times ten thousand accusing sins, you are a saved man. O that others like you would place their dependence upon the same sin-forgiving Savior! May the Eternal Spirit draw them now to Jesus, and give them immediate salvation by precious faith in a precious Christ. Faith is the vital point, the one needful matter, may it be wrought in you now. Faith can soon remove the difficulties which stand in your path, and make you a straight road to glory, for it is a wonder-worker, and all things are possible to it—

*“It says to the mountains, Depart,
That stand betwixt God and the soul;
It binds up the broken in heart,
And makes wounded consciences whole;
Bids sins of a crimson-like dye
Be spotless as snow, and as white,
And makes such a sinner as I
As pure as an angel of light.”*

III. Thirdly, another wonder was THE REALIZING ENERGY of this man’s FAITH WHICH LED HIM TO DEAL WITH THE CASE IN SUCH A BUSINESS-LIKE WAY.

Alas, alas, the hackneyed form which most men’s religion assumes! They take it up at second-hand, or they cut and shape it after somebody else’s fashion. Not so this man. I do not know that he had ever had a religious acquaintance, but falling in probably with some of the books of Scripture, he read them, and he discovered that Jesus Christ was what He professed to be—the Son of God, and the Savior of men. Having come to this conclusion, he at once trusted in Him as a matter of fact, not as a matter of profession merely, and having trusted in the Savior, he acted upon the trust in a business-like common-sense manner. He sat down and he considered with himself thus—“I am a captain; I say to a soldier, Go, and he goes; I say to another, Come—he comes; I appoint my servant who waits upon me to do certain business, and he does it, now, this Jesus Christ is a far greater commander than I am; all the powers of nature must therefore be under His check and control; He will only have to say a thing, and it will be done, if He were to bid the heavens be clothed in blackness, they would don the sackcloth, and if He were to command the clouds to disappear, and the sun to shine or to stand still, the obedient sun would know its Master, and yield a willing homage to Him.”

The centurion, according to the best rules of argument, was led to this conclusion, and his practical mind made immediate use of the inference. That Jesus can accomplish His will with a word is what you and I ought also to infer from His nature and office, and that He is ready to exercise that power is clear from His character and His promises. “Well, then,” said the centurion, “I have but to go and ask Him, and if His heart is moved with my piteous story, He will only have to say it in one single word, and bad as my servant’s case is, he will be cured at once, and I shall be the happy master of a healthy servant.” Now that was fine reasoning. That was treating fact as fact, and not as we too often do, as if it was pious fiction. This godly soldier was no mere theorist, no superficial holder of an unpractical creed, but a doer of the Word, a genuine matter-of-fact believer in what he held to be true.

Now, I do pray that each one here may be able to treat the Gospel as a matter of business, treat it as a matter of fact, and may none of you trifle and toy with it, nor think it to be a mere subtlety for the consideration for doctrinaires, a theme of dispute for theorists and men who merely think and talk. I pray you make the one thing needful the first and true business of your lives. If anything be real, surely

eternal salvation must be. Your condition before God is not a subject for cloud-land, it belongs to the common-sense, practical, everyday, life-business of men.

See, now, how it stands. You have broken God's law. You are guilty. God must punish you, eternal justice demands it. But the Lord Jesus came into the world to provide a way by which, without dishonor to God's justice, sin may be forgiven. That way was substitution. Christ stood in the sinner's stead, was punished with the sinner's punishment, and bore the wrath of God for sinners. But for what sinners? For all sinners? Nay, but for such as will trust Him. I, then, being guilty, come and trust Him. I see good reason to do so. He is God, and He was appointed by God to be a propitiation for sin. What God appoints, and God delights in, I may truthfully and confidently accept. I do accept Him. I do now trust my soul with Jesus. Then I am saved. My sin has gone, my iniquity has ceased to be, I am a saved soul. Come and reason thus with yourself.

Oh! I pray the Holy Ghost to help you to do so. Let this be the subject of your soliloquy, "If I were omnipotent, as Christ is, it would be as easy for me to move a mountain as a mole hill, and therefore is it as easy for Him to take away my great sins as another's little sins, if there be a universal cleansing fluid, it will take out great spots as well as little spots, and therefore the blood of Christ can wash out my great sins as well as the lesser sins of other people. One stroke of the hand, and the bill is receipted, it is as easy to write a receipt for a bill of fifty thousand pounds as for a bill for ten pence, so if Jesus Christ, who has already paid believers' debts, calls me pardoned and absolved, it is done, He has the power to do it, and I rely upon the merit of His atoning blood." O that you would now do so! and I will add, O that you would do so now!

These Sabbath days, how they are flying! Your time, how it is passing away, and with your time your opportunities for finding mercy! It does not seem long ago since we were in the depth of winter, and now we are getting near the longest day in summer, and anon the wings of time will soon bear us again into months of frost and snow. How long will you halt between two opinions? Are these delays to continue forever? Will you always go on hearing about these things, but never attending to them? I do pray you by the flight of time, by the certainty of death to each of you, and your ignorance of its appointed hour, seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near. Lay hold of eternal life, and like the centurion, come and put your trust in Jesus to save you, and though your faith will be marvelous, yet the honor shall be all to Him, and the glory to His blessed name.

IV. I will pass on. Another point of wonder in the centurion's faith was this THAT HE DID NOT ASK FOR A SIGN.

Many of the great ones of old, when God was about to fulfill a promise, needed to be strengthened for service by a sign. Gideon was a man of great faith, yet he needed first to have the fleece wet when all was dry around, and then to have the fleece dry while the threshing-floor was wet. He needed to hear the soldiers' dream of the barley cake that tumbled upon the tent of Midian. He wanted signs and wonders, or his heart would have fainted. With many others the desire for signs and wonders has been a great barrier to simple faith. Now the centurion did not say as Naaman did, "I thought He would surely come and put His hand over the place and recover the paralytic." No, he did not need Jesus to come to the house and say a word, or offer prayer, or even to touch the sick with His hand. "Nay, Master," said he, "there is no need for you to come; my servant is far away, lying sick and near to die; You need not stir an inch; say in a word, and he will be healed. Distance is nothing to you; your word at a mile's distance can cure as well as your touch." Oh, but this was grand faith! He wants no visible sign, his spiritual eye sees the invisible, and his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

His unstagging faith requires no crutch. He wants nothing, but only prays that the Master will say the word. I do not think he expected to *hear* the Lord speak that word aloud, for in Luke he is described as praying Jesus not so much to say a word as to "say *in* a word." Perhaps he remembered the language of the psalmist when he sang, "He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions," and he looked to that same creating and almighty word for the restoration of his servant.

Now, brethren, transfer this to yourselves. I pray the Holy Spirit that many here may have the faith which does not crave for signs and wonders. "I could believe," says one, "that I were saved, if I felt some terrible work of the law within my heart, I have heard of others who have been ready to despair, and have been tempted to commit suicide, and if I felt as they felt I could then think that there was grace for me." Ah! poor simpleton. You know not what you say. Be glad to be delivered from such dreadful things as these, for if some have come out of them to Christ, I am afraid that some have been brought by them to the halter or to some other suicidal death. Do not desire the terrors of hell, but accept the tender mercy of our God whereby the Dayspring from on high has visited us. Horrors and dreads, if you felt them, would not help you, believe me, they would do the very reverse.

"Nay," says another, "I should like to feel an extraordinary sensation, if under the sermon tonight I should be struck down, as I have heard some have been in the Irish revivals, if I felt some remarkable physical, mental, or spiritual emotion, such as I have never experienced before, I should say that this was the finger of God." My dear hearer, why be so foolish? God's Word tells you that if you trust Jesus Christ you are saved. Is not God's Word enough? Will you not take the assurance of God without laying down this and that as a condition for your Savior? Some of you talk and act as if the great God must do what you like, or else you will not believe Him.

I have known persons who were once in the habit of giving away roast beef and other gifts to the poor at Christmas time, but who have given over the doing of it because of the picking and choosing of those who came to receive the gifts. One woman actually took back her joint because she wanted a piece of beef for boiling, and would have a boiling piece or none at all. I have not wondered when persons who have been charitable have not been allowed to do as they will with their own, that they have ceased to distribute their alms as aforetime. Reason teaches us that when we receive benefits we are not to dictate to our benefactors.

And is God, when He saves your soul, to let a beggar like you be a chooser about the way in which it is to be done? Are you to exact this and exact that, or else you will not condescend to be saved? This is infamous pride. Be ashamed, I pray you, be ashamed to indulge in it any longer. No longer demand new proof of God's truthfulness in the form of feelings and excitements. God's Word is worthy of your trust. If you had these remarkable feelings, what would their evidence amount to if you looked at them as a mere man and not as a fanatic? If you were to meet an angel tonight, and he were to tell you that you would go to heaven, you would have no reason to believe him, unless you believe in Jesus Christ. An angel who gave you any comfort while you remain an unbeliever would be a devil, even though he shone like an angel of light. But if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are baptized, you have God's word for it that you are saved, and what do you want an angel's word for? Is not the word of JEHOVAH sufficient, is a creature's testimony necessary to make the Lord's word worthy of credence?

"Nay, say others, but we should be comforted if we could dream remarkable dreams. Now, what could there be to assure the soul as to its salvation in the vain and frolicsome motions of the mind when they are free from the bridle of reason? Dreams may sometimes happen to come true, but nine times out of ten they are nonsense. If good doctrine and wise warning be brought home to the heart by a dream, it should have none the less our most earnest heed, but if presumption should have a thousand visions to back it, it would be none the less dangerous. It would be a dreadful thing to hang one's confidence upon such a fragile thing as a dream. No, no, sir, you have God's Word, and will not believe it because you pretend that a dream would help you, and confirm your confidence, as if God were not to be trusted so well as your dreams! O be not so foolish, but like this centurion say, "Speak the word only."

Brethren, we must accept the bare Word of God in Christ Jesus as the basis of faith, for no other foundation is to be depended on for a moment. Not *your* feeling but *His* promise must sustain you. Can you not consent to this? If you will do so you shall have peace. If you will come to God like that, you shall see many signs and many wonders ere long of a better sort than you have ever dreamed of. Your joy shall be like a river, and your peace shall overflow. But you must first come without these things. Come, and take God at His word, and do Christ the honor to believe in Him without anything to

corroborate what He says, and you shall find the blessing coming to you afterwards. This was a remarkable point in the centurion's faith, that he believed without demanding a sign.

V. Fifthly, one very remarkable point in this good man's faith was HIS CONVICTION THAT CHRIST COULD CURE HIS SERVANT AT ONCE, "Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed."

Ordinarily a successful combat with disease requires time. The surgeon must drive out from his strong entrenchments the fiend of disease, must chase him from one defense to another, and perhaps even then he may fail to dislodge his foe. It may be weary months or even years before some forms of disease can be eradicated. But the centurion believed that the word of Christ could remove the palsy, and do so at once. And why not? Omnipotence knows nothing of time any more than of any other of the hindrances which impede mortal progress. To the eternal God time is nothing, to Him a thousand years are as one day, and on the other hand, one day is as a thousand years. The faith that saves lays hold on this truth that Christ Jesus who is now at the right hand of God can in a moment save the soul. The dying thief did not imagine that his salvation would occupy a month. He simply said, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom," and the answer was, "Today shall you be with me in paradise"—saved that day, saved at once. The pardon of sin is not the result of weeks of fasting, and months of repentance, and years of mortification. The sinner's eye looks to Christ and the sinner's sin is gone at once—

*"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation in full through Christ's blood."*

The new birth of the soul, the regeneration of our nature by the Holy Spirit, is not a work requiring a long period of time. It is in a moment that the Spirit of God visits our hearts, and turns the stone to flesh. It may seem as though I talked without consideration, but yet I speak the words of truth and soberness when I say that if the Lord put forth the fullness of His power, sinners sitting in these galleries or in this area, might be saved ere that clock ticks again. Who shall restrain the Lord, and say what He can do or cannot do? All things are possible with Him, and we will therefore add that if each one of you tonight were led to put his trust in Jesus, what I said was possible, would be literally done, you would all retire, each one saved, and saying, "Blessed be the name of the Lord who has taken us out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock, and put a new song into our mouths, and established our goings!" O that You would do this, good Lord, that Your name might have praise!

VI. Once more. One other point of wonder. THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE THE CENTURION'S DEEP HUMILITY WAS CONSPICUOUS, BUT THAT DEEP HUMILITY, INSTEAD OF WEAKENING HIS FAITH, ONLY STRENGTHENED IT.

Pride is the associate of presumption, but humility is the companion of assurance. He who thinks that it needs but little grace and power to save him, that he is, in fact, better than most, and as good as any, cannot believe at all. He may be able to presume, but he is unable to believe. Doubtless presumption would grow well in the soil of his heart, but only a broken heart alone becomes a believing heart, and an assured heart must first be a humble heart.

The centurion had done good service for the Jews. He loved their nation and had built them a synagogue. They thought a great deal of him, but he thought very little of himself. He said, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof," "I am not only not worthy of the blessing I ask, but not worthy that You should come into such communion with me as to tread my floor." Deeply humbled was the man, and in a humbled spirit you also must become a believer.

I have met with a great many who when they have felt a sense of their sin have said directly, "I cannot believe in Christ." Then you fancy, do you, that if you had less sin you could believe? Nay, I tell you it is not so. If your sense of sin be a hindrance to faith, your sense of righteousness would be infinitely more a barrier. To believe that I shall be saved because I am not a sinner, is not faith, but to

know that I am one of the very worst of sinners, and very guilty and very vile, and yet I place my trust in Jesus—this is faith. I do love when I look at my sins to look at the cross too. If I have been of service to God, and the Holy Spirit has helped me to do some good thing for the church, it is scarcely faith to say that I then am at peace. Why, that is seeing, not believing. But when I see my imperfections, and bemoan my follies, and lay my mouth in the very dust, then to say, “Notwithstanding all this I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him”—that is faith, and I pray God that you may exercise it every day. If my sins were worse than they are, or if I could have a deeper apprehension of them, I would nevertheless rejoice that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, and, from that rock of confidence my soul should not remove.

My brethren, do not imagine that to have faith in Christ you have to work yourselves up into the idea that there is some good thing in you which can recommend you to Christ. You are sailing on the wrong tack altogether when your trust leans on self. Faith is to come to Christ blind, and believe that He can open your eyes; it is to come to Him poor, and believe that He will make you rich; it is to come to Him as having nothing of your own, and take what He has to be yours forever and ever; it is, in fact, to see death written on the creature, and to find life in Him; corruption written on your best righteousness, and to count it to be as dross and dung, and then to take Jesus Christ to be your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, your redemption, and your all.

I have thus, I trust, set forth what faith is in as simple a way as I know how to speak, and yet, simple as this statement is, if any of you do so believe, there will be glory brought to God by it, for no man ever did believe except the Holy Spirit led him to believe.

“What?” says one, “such a simple thing as that?” Permit me to observe that it is the simplicity of faith that makes it difficult. If it were difficult there would be many who would attempt it, but because it is nothing but—“Believe and live,” therefore proud hearts will not yield to it. It is as simple as the first elements of spelling, and because it is so, men cannot understand it, for their pride must necessarily surround it with mystery. Men would desire to be wise, and therefore they puzzle themselves with that which a child may understand. What is wanted for a man to know Christ is for him to get his conceit of education winnowed out of him, I mean that what he thinks to be education must be all pulled away, that he may be made like a little child, to sit down at Jesus’ feet and trust Jesus as a child believes its father’s word.

It is not going up that most of you want, but pulling down. It is not getting good, it is feeling you are not good, which is the main thing for most of you to look to. It is not being better in your own esteem, it is being utterly undone in your own esteem, which will make you ready for Christ. This you need, and when you have it I believe you will then come and cheerfully lay hold on this blessed, this simple way of salvation, suitable to the vilest, and yet suitable to the most moral, fitted, as one said once, to poor old women who are on their dying beds, and equally fitted to the profoundest of philosophers, fitted for the poor, fitted for the rich, fitted for me, fitted for you.

O that you would have my Lord to be your strong refuge. My Lord and Master, grant that He may also marvel at your faith, dear friends, and though you had none when you came into this Tabernacle, may you go out rejoicing because the Lord has visited you, and helped you to believe in His name.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 8.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.